

Walking: What You Should Know



The Surgeon General recommends that you walk 10,000 steps per day to achieve fitness.

There's one activity that you can start today to improve your health, and with so many people counting on you what could be more important? That activity is walking. Walking has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other chronic diseases.

If you are not already exercising on a regular basis, you can begin by walking. At work, take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator. If you live or work near the park, library, grocery store, or other frequent destinations, consider walking (rather than driving) to get to where you need to go.

Be sure to walk smart. If you haven't been active for a while, first check with your doctor. Your doctor can help you determine a walking schedule that's right for you based on your age, weight, and current level of activity. Over time, you'll be able to walk farther and more quickly.

Benefits of Walking:

Studies have shown that walking helps people relax, sleep better, and feel better; and increases energy.

Other benefits of walking:

- Reduces stress
- Tones muscles
- Helps control appetite
- Increases the number of calories used by the body
- Reduces the risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and colon cancer
- Can help reduce blood pressure in some people with hypertension
- Helps maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Fosters improvements in mood and feelings of well being
- Helps control weight, develop lean muscle, and reduce body fat

Other Facts about Walking:

10,000 steps = approximately 5 miles

1,200 = number of steps the average person takes in 10 minutes of walking

Please see reverse

Planning your Walking Program:

Leave time in your busy schedule to follow a walking program that will work for you. In planning your walking program, keep the following points in mind:

- Choose a safe place to walk. Find a partner or group of people to walk with you.
- Wear shoes with thick flexible soles that will cushion your feet and absorb shock.
- Wear clothes that will keep you dry and comfortable. Look for synthetic fabrics that absorb sweat and remove it from your skin.
- For extra warmth in winter, wear a knit cap. To stay cool in summer, wear a baseball cap or visor.
- Do light stretching before and after you walk.
- Think of your walk in three parts. Walk slowly for 5 minutes. Increase your speed for the next 5 minutes. Finally, to cool down, walk slowly again for 5 minutes.
- Try to walk at least three times per week. Add 2 to 3 minutes per week to the fast walk. If you walk less than three times per week, increase the fast walk more slowly.
- To avoid stiff or sore muscles or joints, start gradually. Over several weeks, begin walking faster, going further, and walking for longer periods of time.

Additional Resources:

National Women's Health Information Center www.womenshealth.gov

American Podiatric Medical Association www.apma.org

Pedestrian & Bicycle Information Center www.walkinginfo.org

For More Information:

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